

# LISTENER

Incorporating N.Z. RADIO RECORD

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## Is It I?

THE most solemn supper in history was eaten in suspicion and sorrow. Thousands of books have been written, thousands more will be written, denouncing, excusing, or explaining Judas, but the simple story that most people accept will outlive our civilisation. Of the twelve disciples one was a traitor, and yet it bewilders and alarms us if one person in twelve thousand is a traitor in the present war.

Instead of being alarmed we should face the fact that weeds grow in every crop. If it were not so we would not be at war. We are fighting the crookedness, the greed, the vanity, the cruelty of the human race, and some of it must be on our own side. No war in history was ever a clear struggle of good against evil so far as the individual is concerned. There must be cowards, there are always weaklings, in every considerable group of individuals there will be scoundrels on the prowl for gain. There must in addition be perverts and lunatics—minds with a twist, eyes that see white where others see black, hate-deafened ears, and tongues dropping poison.

It is not a new experience that men going forward to battle should be treacherously attacked from the rear. What is new is the fact that attack is twenty times easier and a hundred times more deadly. Traitors in Plymouth could not sink Nelson when he was three days out from the Hoe. But treachery to-day can sink a ship on the other side of the world. Although we must not assume that treachery sank the Rangitane it is a fact that treachery could have done so a day, a week, or even a month after she cleared New Zealand.

Judas is now a master of science. He can bear false witness to a million people on the same day. He can block harbours, destroy bridges, blow up buildings that he has never even seen. And because that is one of the hazards of war we must face it calmly instead of getting hysterical about it.

While the authorities are dredging the official channels of communication the task for the rest of us is to ask how far our own carelessness has given treachery its chance.

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

Letters sent to "The Listener" for publication should be as brief as possible and should deal with topics covered in "The Listener" itself. Correspondents must send their names and addresses even when it is their wish that these should not be published. We cannot undertake to give reasons why all or any portion of a letter is rejected.

## BROADCAST PROGRAMMES

Sir,—Criticisms of the programmes are many, but mine does not concern itself with their nature but with the times chosen. Nightly we are surfeited with musical recordings while the most inopportune times allotted for many items result in important broadcasts falling on the empty air. As an instance, Sunday afternoon was chosen for the broadcasting of a series of talks on the outstanding work of New Zealanders abroad. Some people who happened occasionally to be at home at 3 o'clock on Sunday afternoons heard one or two of the ten talks and regretted they had missed the others. This series is now being broadcast from 1YA, Auckland, and the hour chosen is the same as that of 2YA, Wellington, although we are now in mid-summer when the call to the outdoors is more insistent on Sunday afternoons than during the Wellington broadcast a couple of months ago. As "New Zealand Brains Abroad" touches so many families in this country, and is such a revelation of the work of our own people in all parts of the world, I trust that the authorities will give their countrymen and women an opportunity of hearing of them by allotting the talks a suitable time at night when people have more leisure and a greater desire to listen.—N.Z. PATRIOT (Oamaru).

The official reply to this complaint is briefly this: "N.Z. Patriot" would have cause for complaint if it were correct, as he suggests in his second sentence, that listeners are being nightly surfeited with musical recordings while important broadcasts fall on empty air. Actually, listeners are complaining that musical programmes are being interfered with far too much for the purpose of broadcasting war talks. While we do not subscribe to this view, we feel that some reasonable proportion must be maintained between war talks and the artistic side of the broadcast programmes. It would have been most difficult to justify finding a space in the evening programmes for the "N.Z. Brains Abroad" talks, and almost impossible to guarantee any regularity in the presentation of the talks. It was therefore a case of Sunday afternoon or not at all in the meantime.

## DON GIOVANNI

Sir,—As a music-lover I wish to express my appreciation of the recorded presentation of the above opera. I shall look forward to the second half when the delicate and delightful little air, "Deh vieni alla finestra," should be heard to advantage. I am sure many besides myself would be glad to hear more complete operas presented. The tuneful "Lucia di Lammermoor" with its Scottish setting would be popular.

A few suggestions. The "William Tell" Overture is frequently rendered, but not the beautiful "Dawn." Similarly, when "The Moonlight Sonata" is announced, why is it always the First Movement? I enjoyed Chopin's brilliant Valse in D Flat Major and timed what is known as "The Minute Waltz." Naturally, it took exactly one minute. I would suggest that mention of this interesting sidelight might add interest to this work. I should like to hear the "Black Key Study"—and referred to as such.

The programme organisers do not seem to appreciate that there are duets from the operas. Though there are hundreds, I don't think I have ever heard one. To name a few enjoyable duets—"Aida," "Les Pêcheurs des Perles," "Don Pasquale," "Rigoletto" (between Rigoletto and Gilda), Lucia (love scene at fountain). There is a vast selection of operatic gems not heard over the air.

The service is in danger of overdoing the Barcarolle (from "Offenbach") and the "Blue Danube."—R. D. BAEYERTZ (Auckland).

## CHILDREN ON THE AIR

Sir,—On Friday, October 4, 1940, the last session of "The Children's Magazine of the Air" was presented from 12B, Auckland. This session was "edited" by Arthur Collyns, and provided a chance for the local talent of Auckland to prove itself. Previously

a chance for local talent meant children trying to sing like famous singers. But Arthur Collyns realised that there were other talents that could be catered for on the air—acting, writing, debating, and many hobbies. So the "Children's Magazine" came into being and catered for young people with interests in all these things. The programmes presented became known as "pages," and I don't think that there have been more than two regular "pages" which have been records.

So the "Children's Magazine" gave the young people of Auckland their chance, and they took it. Why was this chance taken away from them? Why

More letters from listeners will be found on page 10.

should our young people not be allowed the type of session which, by their support, they have shown that they like?—JOAN SCULLY (Auckland).

(These questions were submitted to the Controller of the Commercial Broadcasting Service, who replies as follows: "The Children's Magazine of the Air at 12B was altered because of the extreme difficulty of continuing the programme in view of essential broadcasts of Davenry News and National Service Talks. Other plans are in hand which will give, during the winter months, full scope to youthful talent.")

## JOHN CHARLES THOMAS

Sir,—As a regular reader of *The Listener*, I have been surprised that so far no biographical notes have been published on the American baritone, John Charles Thomas. Would it be possible either through your paper, or by letter, to supply me with some information regarding this singer, and to advise me if he is any relative of another baritone, Thomas L. Thomas, who is featuring in the programmes lately? A photograph in your paper would also be appreciated.—K. R. Berry (Christchurch).

John Charles Thomas is a grand opera, lieder, and ballad singer whose recitals range from classics to cowboy songs. He originally intended to become a doctor, but after studying medicine for a year, competed with 80 other candidates for a scholarship at Peabody Conservatoire in Baltimore and won. Three years at that institution ended in an audition with Henry Savage, which resulted in an engagement that gained him the reputation of being the highest-paid artist in musical comedy. He was, however, ambitious, and gave as much time as he could to lieder repertory, and while in Brussels was given a contract at the Royal Opera. His debut in Brussels in "Herodiade" was followed by engagements to sing at Covent Garden, London, and in Berlin, Vienna, and with the Chicago, Philadelphia and San Francisco opera companies. He is now a member of the New York Metropolitan Opera Company. Because John Charles Thomas has made several splendid records of negro songs there is a persistent idea that he is a negro, which, of course, is not the case. John Charles is not related to Thomas L.

## HYMNS FOR THE BANDS

Sir,—I was astonished to read, under the above heading in your issue of January 17, a letter signed "B. Natural," in which the hymn known as "Madrid" was lauded to the skies. The correspondent quoted remarks made by a friend of his, who, after hearing this hymn tune played by a British band, was so "thrilled" that he is alleged to have stood "spell-bound" and to have exclaimed that "he did not think such music possible."

Well, sir, if this is a fact, it simply gives further proof that the British are not a musical race. Of all the hundreds of hymn tunes in our hymnaries "Madrid" is one of the most commonplace and the least interesting. It contains 16 bars. Twelve of these bars are merely repetitions of the opening musical phrase, while the remaining 4 bars also repeat a secondary phrase. There are many magnificent hymn tunes which, when well played, are truly thrilling, but "Madrid" is decidedly not one of them.—L.D. AUSTIN (Wellington).

## ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

"Listener" (Southland): The compositions you mention do not seem to be on sale locally, but they are published by Chappell and Co., Sydney, and could no doubt be obtained through any local music house.